

I Getting Nowhere

Mad Monk's Life Ambition

Sorry monk that I am,
I never amounted to nothing.

Did someone lay on a jinx and say:
You'll never amount to nothing?

How sad, since I took nothing
as my monastic goal.

I still don't amount to nothing,
still think I'm something.

I hardly amount to a hill of beans but
this already is too much of something.

What ever might you mount
to amount to nothing?

Where is that magical mountain?
where that weird agility to climb a hill of humus,
humility so grounded it ascends by descending?
a humility that does not know it is a virtue.

When I find it, if I ever do,
comparing something with nothing will cease.

Any measure or judgment of my own
itself amounts to nothing.

Thin Host

Such a flake of a thing—
this thin wafer!

Hardly the highest achievement
of human nature,
culture or imagination.

Who could love it?
Such humility as this—

simply divine,
humanly simple,
pressed out and baked
to be

the hidden heartbeat of the Cosmic Christ,
the center of all reality.

Undefined

The closer I get to the bell tower
the louder it says

Definitely
Definitely

but leaves out definitely what.

What is my life
but an undefined definitely

occupying space and time
in the vastness of

the - - - - -

God

A soft, round word
 Mother taught me

said putting my mouth
 in a circle

with soft G way back in my
 deep swallow cave

followed by silent D
 front tongue closing

cloud scarcely seen
 then gone

a quiet word

told in a quiet
 moment

when first I learned
 to shape the word

God.

Watchman

Watchman, what of the night?

What of it?

What do you watch?

Nothing.

What then of nothing?

Can't say. Seems something
always gets in the way.

Something like what?

Fireflies, whippoorwills, rain smells.

Of course! What else did you expect?

Nothing.

Then why watch?

Haven't found nothing yet.

Why not?

I expected it.

Expected what?

Nothing.

That sounds so easy!

Too easy for me. Been trying too hard.

At what?

Just to do it. Watching. Without doing anything.

Alone with the Alone

I just want to go hide.
They'll all think I'm dead,
but that will not concern me.

Some poet said galaxies
are a good place to hide—in a thicket of stars.
But any Kentucky thicket would be good enough for me;
there I could secretly watch small creatures
who want to go hide. And then I'll know
the thousand and one ways to be
and to be unknown.

It might seem like playing God on a small scale.
But God doesn't mind. God likes to pretend
at being God on a small scale.

What is an Anti-Poem?

How could I ever write an anti-poem? If I did, I would not know it, would hardly notice anything had been written. I would not care to read it myself or even acknowledge it as my own. Booted out of the door, it would wander forlornly, looking for a home in any poor anthology, or a magazine or even just a college print-off—one that seems to favor anti-style, but really doesn't because it is too concerned with setting a style.

This little litter of anti-words would be something you picked up on the street, or photographed like graffiti on an alley wall with the words chopped at the edges. No, this poem is not *anti* anything, doesn't rant and rage, or pick a fight, or politely schmooze with any society, high or low. It drifts off into a wasteland of things half said, follows no intention, and half wonders what it meant to say. Its only comfort is to lie down in a heap of silence and forget anything was said at all.

I will never hear of what became of this anti-poem and would hardly remember it. At best, in a moment of silence there might be an inkling of a nameless something that is happy it no longer is, because it scarcely had been, and the world is just as well without it.

No use making a definition of an anti-poem, since it never had any definition.

The Grammar of Be/cause

Mom would answer “because . . .”
when I asked “why can’t I?”

“because” . . . left as a dangling conjunctive.

Be/cause, a categorical imperative:
a moral principle sufficient unto itself
in the realm of causes.

Because answers directly to “why?”

Because.

Because why?

Because . . .

But why?

Because I’m your Mother, that’s why—
collapsing *because* in-
to that womb of ultimate causality.

“*Because*”: cryptic unto the point of obviousness
a common-sense commonplace

intrinsic self-evidence
entitled to be unto
ultimate cause of be/causes.

That Barbarian in the Mirror

How thoughtlessly I raise my chin every morning
and set razor to my barbed neck, and there, face to face with myself,
enact a casual rite of suicide. It frightens me not the least
and proves in fact I'm willing to go on living, yes
until this time tomorrow. Then I will repeat
the old mindless masque of victim and executor, lift blade to neck
in unbloody sacrifice to tidy me up for the treacherous world.

I don't believe in my own sad ritual and have forgotten its meaning.
I do it the same as Dad, who twisted the Gillette and lifted
a thin razor to his jugular vein, not quite as his father did when
religion was real,
handling lethal, straight blades and strop. Such vestiges of bloody sacrifice
were doomed by electric shavers.

Meanwhile reports of suicide are on the rise
since no daily ceremony raises awareness
against a civilized man's savage slasher—
the barbarian in the mirror.

Emily, your spare lines

scarcely defined
emerged from blank
to blank to fade
a trace of persistent guesses—

whatever have you been?

Merton's anniversary

“passed” 50 years ago, they say.
Well, that number counts for nothing.
Better to say, “*subsists* in the ever untimed.”

Years count not, no measure there is
for boundless embrace of All-time.
Was—is—will be
co-exist there
simultaneously.

Outside this, nothing is.
Time inside this revolves;
history is a closed circle
ever completed, ever changing.

Wearily we count out years
until counting proves of no account,
hours never diminished but grown full in
All-time.

We age in parcels—leave this behind,
gain that awhile, run headlong to bump into already;
smell afar the scent of beyond,
staying in nothing but the unstayed.

All-time is being
altogether.

A revolving disk with no outer rim,
whose center is everywhere.